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ABSTRACT

To determine whether the media in one state have reflected current trends in crime reporting, a study focused on crime news content in the 24 Louisiana daily newspapers in 1980 and in 1985. Issues addressed were whether statewide crime coverage increased or decreased, if the placement of crime news and type of headline changed, and whether coverage of specific types of crimes reflected trends for reported crimes. For the study, researchers separated the newspapers into four groups by circulation and divided the newspapers' communities by size. Crime stories were counted for two 1-week periods chosen at random for both 1980 and 1985. Findings indicated that overall crime news in Louisiana increased, and much of the increased coverage was because newspapers published more "driving under the influence of alcohol" incidents and crime prevention stories, as well as more stories about personal and property crimes. Crime prevention items increased by more than 200%, a trend that reflected the media/police programs initiated in many Louisiana cities to inform and to protect the public against crime. Also, more crime news was published on the front pages in 1985 than in 1980. But more than three-fourths of the crime coverage appeared on the inside pages. Overall, crime news did not mirror reported crimes, with violent crimes disproportionally emphasized, perhaps because reporters only covered easily accessible crimes or they were unfamiliar with the criminal justice system. (SKC)

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COVERING THE ROOTS OF JUSTICE

LOUISIANA CRIME NEWS IN THE 1980's

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Since the New York Sun employed the first police reporter in 1833, crime news coverage has become a permanent feature in most newspapers. However, the concern about crime as a major social problem in America did not surface until the 1960s (Erskin, 1974-1975; Harris, 1969). Crime has subsequently become a major element in public opinion polls of current perceived problems (Gallup, 1981: 101, 160, 199; CBS/New York Times, 1978:23; Harris and Associates, 1978; Cook, 1971: 23), a fact not entirely overlooked by politicians (Harris, 1969; Schur, 1980). It has even been suggested that newspaper reporters have played unwitting roles in whipping up the public frenzy about crime, frequently playing into the hands of public officials who have a vested interest in such "crime waves" (Fishman, 1978; see too Cook, 1971; Scheingold, 1984).

Currently, newspapers provide their readers with news of crime in their local communities along with national crime rates and incidents. Ryan and Own (1974-1975) report that crime topics are the most frequently used subjects in print and broadcast news reports. Yet in spite of the putative significance of the media in shaping public views about crime and crime-related issues, most of research in this area has been completed by journalism and mass communication scholars. Only a few criminal justice scholars have critically examined the media's reporting of crime news. As James Garofalo (1981:319) observes, "Since one of the most common criticisms of media has been that they incite

criminal and other antisocial behavior, it is surprising that criminologists have not devoted more attention to research on the media."

Concommitant with the increased attention paid to the roles played by print and electronic media in both reporting and "inciting" crime and violence (see Phillips, 1977; 1978; 1979; 1980; 1981; 1982) has been the actual decrease in the crime rates. Interestingly enough, while the phenomenon has been evident to scholars of crime for almost a decade, the FBI and other federal agencies have only recently acknowledged this trend (Department of Justice, 1981, 1986). In point of fact, serious crime in this country has been on the decrease since the late 1970's and early 1980's (Hagan, 1985: 106-113; Sheley, 1985: 89-93; Scheingold, 1984: 38-43; see too Pepinsky and Jesilow, 1985). The question remains as to whether the media have mirrored this decline in their daily accounts of crime.

RELATED RESEARCH

Several studies concerning crime news were completed by scholars other than mass communication researchers. For example, F. James Davis (1952), a sociologist, researched four Colorado newspapers, local public opinion and the Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) of the Federal Bureau of Investigation for 1948, 1949 and 1950. Basically, he concludes, "there is no consistent relationship between the amount of crime news in newspapers and the local crime rates" (Davis, 1952: 330).

In a more recent study that compared a city's newspaper accounts of crime with an official source of crime statistics, once again the UCR, Jones (1976) found essentially the same

pattern. Jones (1976) reports that over a five year period, the newspapers of St. Louis gave a highly distorted view of certain crimes.

Inter-city comparisons have yielded interesting results as well. Cohen (1975) compares coverage of crime in Atlanta and Detroit newspapers, and concludes that newspapers in the latter community had almost twice the crime coverage of the newspaper in the former. However, Cohen points out, Detroit's crime rate was four times that of Atlanta.

Intra-city comparisons are also insightful. After studying crime news coverage in the New York Times and the New York Daily, Meyer (1975: 729) reports substantial differences in coverage which he attributed to the newspapers' particular style of reporting news. Antunes and Hurley (1977) examine the crime news content of the Houston Post and Houston Chronicle and compare the coverage of crime to the actual rates in Houston. They review news of crime in the Houston city limits by coding the crime, date, number of victims, and type of crime and circumstance. Antunes and Hurley conclude that the "[d]istribution of crime news in the Houston press is inversely related to the distribution of crimes reported by the police." (Antunes and Hurley, 1977: 760).

Sheley and Ashkins (1981) study of crime coverage in New Orleans is, with regards to media coverage, far more complete than previous media and crime studies that focus on a single city. They analyzed the crime-only (no trial coverage) content of the Times-Picayune, the newscasts of the three major

television stations in the area, the index crime statistics provided by the New Orleans Police Department, and the results of a public survey of attitudes toward social problems in the New Orleans area. The authors report that the media's distribution of crimes was not proportional to the police figures, notably however, the newspaper's distribution was closer to the police statistics than the television distribution); and, "the public's view of crime trends over time displays little agreement with either police or media figures" (Sheley and Ashkins, 1981: 502-3).

Finally, Stroman and Seltzer (1984) studied perceptions of crime by the users of the media, including newspapers and television, by surveying media usage, perceptions of crime causes and fears of crime. Here again, the purpose was to establish a direct correlation between crime coverage by the different media and the media users' perceptions of crime and its causes. Stroman and Seltzer (1984: 344-45) conclude that in spite of observed differences in the user's perceptions of crimes depending on which medium is used, "these data do not offer strong evidence of differing media influences."

In summary, the extant research suggests that crime news coverage by newspaper is at best proportional to crime rates. Most newspapers allocate about 10% of their space to news of crime and justice (Dominick, 1978). Of the eight index crimes, only murder and robbery are consistently reported by the press. Other crimes received less space and prominence in the news. Although previous research has determined that crime news typically does not mirror crime rates, little is known about how

newspapers handle crime news across time periods, particularly across time periods in which, by all objective accounts, the crime rate is experiencing significant changes. Also, while researchers have compared different cities and even different newspapers within a single city, a statewide picture of crime news over time is missing. Finally, very little is known about the specific details of the crime stories. It is toward these unknown quantities that the present study is directed.

In order to provide a case study as to whether the media in one state have reflected current trends, the present study focuses on crime news content in the 24 Louisiana daily newspapers. Of particular interest is the manner in which the Louisiana daily press presented crime news to readers in 1980 and in 1985. Specifically, the following questions are addressed:

(1) Did general statewide crime coverage increase or decrease between 1980 and 1985?

(2) Did the placement of crime news and type of headline change between 1980 and 1985?

(3) Did the coverage of specific types of crimes reflect the trends for reported crimes?

METHOD

All 24 daily newspapers --- 17 evening, six morning and one "all day" papers--- in 22 Louisiana cities were included in the current study. These newspapers were originally divided into several categories by circulation size. First, the New Orleans Times- Picayune/States-Item, the Baton Rouge Morning Advocate and the Shreveport Times all had circulations of more than 75,000.

The Lake Charles American Press, the Alexandria Town Talk, the Monroe New Star World, the Baton Rouge State Times, and the Lafayette Advertiser each had circulation figures more than 30,000 and up to 75,000. The third group had circulations of more than 10,000 but less than 30,000 and included the Shreveport Journal, the Houma Courier and Terrebone Press, the Opelousas World, the New Iberia Iberian, the Hammond Star, and the Thibodaux Comet. The final group of papers all had circulations of less than 10,000. Included in this fourth group were the Leesville Leaders, the Bogalusa News, the Ruston Leader, the Slidell Daily Times, the Bastrop Enterprise, the Morgan City Review, the Abbeville Merdional, the Jennings News, the Crowley Post Signal, the Minden Press-Herald, and the Franklin Banner-Tribune.

A key part of this research is the comparison of trends in newspaper accounts of crime and the reported crime rate. Consequently, the 22 communities were grouped by city size rather than circulation. This requirement necessitated three compromises. First, the two smaller Shreveport and Baton Rouge papers were moved into the same group as the larger papers in each community and, with respect to the UCR categories, New Orleans, the only city of 1,000,000 residents in Louisiana, was included in the same group as Baton Rouge and Shreveport.

Two one week periods were chosen at random for both 1980 and 1985 to analyze crime content. The two time periods for each year were February 17-23 and April 28-May 4. The examination of two weeks of daily crime coverage for both years in 24 newspapers yielded approximately 572 newspaper editions and 1,632 crime news

stories. In 1980 there were 657 stories with 958 criminal events; five years later these same two weeks yielded 975 stories and about 1,503 separate criminal events.

Crime news was defined as any item concerning law breaking by adults or juveniles, as well as those items focusing on crime as a social problem, methods of crime prevention, and crime rate increases and decreases. The newspaper content included for analysis did not cover the entire justice process. The units studied included only crime news items beginning with the report of a crime to the arrest of a suspect in addition to stories of crime prevention and crime rates.

Each item[1] about crime was coded as to newspaper, year, story placement,[2] headline width,[3] news source,[4] location of the crime,[5] and the type of crime news.[6] In addition, information relative to the number of offenders, age of offenders, sex of offenders, offenders' racial background, number of victims, age of victims, sex of victims, racial background of victims, damage loss, and injury loss were also coded. The completeness of the coding was used as a measure of inter-coder reliability. In fact, using the test-retest method, inter-coder reliability on 78 crime news items was 95.1% (Stempel, 1955).

RESULTS

The official crime picture in Louisiana from 1980 to 1985 is presented in Table 1. Owing to the rather large numbers involved, and the fact that this is a "census" of crime in 20 Louisiana towns, cities and Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas, any statistical tests of significance would be rather misleading.

Two cities, Hammond and Slidell, were excluded owing to the fact that only incomplete crime data were available. In addition, the Federal Bureau of Investigation requires that in the case of a person charged with multiple offenses, that only the most serious crime must be reported. This shortcoming is not a problem for newspaper reporters who can and do report on all of the crimes/charges. However, in spite of this difference between UCR crime data and newspaper accounts, both should at least reflect the same upward or downward trends, although we would naturally expect that the latter accounts would be inflated by some discernible factor, possibly the average number of criminal events per story. (See Table 6).

//Table 1 About Here//

In terms of the absolute number of Index or serious crimes reported to the police, 10 of the 20 communities involved experienced decreases. A few experienced rather large gross increases, including Lake Charles (+12.9%), Baton Rouge (+25%), and Lafayette (+49.9%); however, most of the gross increases were less than 10%. Group 2, which included Lake Charles and Lafayette, experienced the largest gross increase (+17.9%), following by Group 1 (+7.6%) and Group 3 (+1.0%). Groups 4 and 5 actually experienced decreases (-34.8% and -4.9%, respectively). Overall, the portion of Louisiana represented by these communities experienced a 6.7% increase in the raw number of index crimes between 1980 and 1985.

The figures contained in Table 1 are simply the raw number of criminal events, and are only the most serious criminal events in a possible series of events. Of course, these crime, and any

ancillary crimes, would be the ones reported by the police, and logically included by reporters in their stories. The fact remains that simply counting events, what many criminologists agree should yield the most inflated view of crime in a community, yields only slight increases in local community rates, grouped rates and the state as a whole. Furthermore, when these events are standardized to account for population, the resultant crime per capita rates reveal a slightly different picture of crime in Louisiana. A total of 12 communities reported lower rates per 100,000 population in 1985 as compared to 1980. More importantly, four out of the five population groups reported decreases as well. Only the group with non-SMSA cities with population in excess of 10,000 but less than 100,000 (Group 2) reported increases. However, both the raw number of offenses and per capita rates in Baton Rouge and Shreveport increased dramatically. The decrease in Group 1 is largely due to the decrease in New Orleans, the largest city in the state. The state as a whole experienced a per 100,000 population index crime decrease on the order of 122 crimes per 100,000, or nearly two percent. The communties of Louisiana served by the newspapers included in this study, like the rest of the nation, experienced an overall down turn in total index crimes, in spite of observable variations from community to community.

The newspapers of these communities portrayed a much different picture of crime. As related in Table 2, 21 out of the 24 daily newspapers increased their coverage of crime news from 1980 to 1985. In fact, there was a 67% increase in the number of

crime-related items in all state newspapers. The largest numerical increases were found in the smaller-circulated newspapers. For instance, the Abbeville Meridional increased its coverage 300% while the Baton Rouge Morning Advocate increased by 50%.

//Table 2 About Here//

The increases in crime coverage between 1980 and 1985 were indeed statistically significant (X^2 = 49.09; df = 23; p=.0012). However, the previous statement is in part misleading. Only a handful of newspapers actually experienced changes in the proportion of their crime news to the total reported for the state. For example, in 1980 the Times-Picayune reported 85 crime items or 13% of the total number of criminal events reported by all newspapers for that time period, while in 1985 the 120 items still accounted for 12.3% of the total. In short, with three exceptions, all the rest of the newspapers reported proportionate increases between 1980 and 1985 in the number of crime items contained in their papers. The three exceptions were Monroe's News Star ($z = 2.08$; $p < .001$), Lafayette's Advertiser ($z = 3.47$; $p < .001$) and Opelousas' World ($z = 2.43$; $p > .001$). The Monroe and Lafayette newspapers are in Group 2; the Opelousas paper is in Group 3.

Table 2 contains another key difference between the four main groups, this time involving item placement. (Group 5 is not included in this discussion owing to the fact that it consists of a single newspaper and a total of 11 crime items.) In 1980, the Group 1 newspapers, taken as a whole, reported 6.3% of their 287 crime stories on the front page. In 1985, however, these same

newspapers included 14.4% of their 417 stories on the front page, a change in proportions that was significant ($z = -3.36$; $p > .001$). Group 2 reported a similar increase, from 6.1% in 1980 to 18.3% in 1985 ($z = -3.43$; $p > .001$). Oddly enough, Group 3 reported no significant changes in the proportion of stories allocated to the front page over this time period, and Group 4 actually experienced a significant decrease ($z = 2.93$; $p > .001$) in allocations from 50.8% to 34.8%. One pattern did not change: Overall, most of the crime news items in all but a handful of papers appeared on the inside pages.

Nearly 60% of the headlines used in both 1980 and 1985 were minor ones, and most of these headlines were found on the inside-page crime items (see Table 3). Many of the minor one-column headlines were on the police report items from the various parishes (counties) and on the local crime stories. Major crime stories rated the larger display headlines, such as the banner, spread or two-column, and these headlines tended to be placed on the front pages.

//Table 3 About Here//

Still there were significant changes in headline types between 1980 and 1985 ($X^2 = 45.56$; $df = 5$; $p < .001$). Significantly more photographs ($z = -.3.22$; $p > .001$) and banner headlines ($z = -2.18$; $p > .001$) were used. Finally, in terms of crime item text, increases in major one-column stories ($z = -3.99$; $p > .001$) were offsetting decreases in minor one-column stories ($z = 4.69$; $p > .001$), in spite of the fact that the latter continued to be the mode in 1985.

A majority of the crime news items, as shown in Table 4, were written by the daily newspapers' reporters for both time periods. Staff-written copy reflected the location of local crime news, as indicated in Table 5. Nearly all of the other news stories were taken from a wire service such as the Associated Press (AP) or United Press International (UPI). The use of syndicated stories was rare. Most of those stories were either about crime in other parts of Louisiana or in another state.

//Tables 4 & 5 About Here//

There was no major change in proportion of news stories attributed to staff or wire service between 1980 and 1985. However, the location of the crime as reported did experience some changes worthy of note. A significantly higher proportion of stories in 1985 than in 1980 were either national ($z = -2.17$; $p > .001$) or national/international ($z = -2.42$; $p > .001$) in origin. The losses in local, state and regional locales were fairly evenly distributed and not, in any one instance, significant. No doubt part of the increases is due to heightened terrorist activities abroad and increased drug trafficking activities with international connections.

In 1980 over 75% of the crime news focussed on assaults and property offenses. One offense in five was a public order crime, while public decency, crime rates news and crime prevention stories accounted for the rest. By 1985 there were significant changes in the numbers of events reported in these crime types ($X^2 = 28.91$; $df = 5$; $p > .001$). As shown in Table 6, the proportional increase in public-order news by 1985 was

substantial ($z = 4.73$; $p > .001$), with the publication of DWI lists accounting for much of the increase. Crime prevention news, on the other hand, doubled from 1980 to 1985 ($z = -2.25$; $p > .001$), with most of this increase coming from cooperative police/media programs such as "Crimestoppers".

//Table 6 About Here//

The traditionally fear-provoking crimes of assault and property continued to account for nearly two-thirds of the crimes included in 1985 stories, but these items experienced significant decreases in the their proportionate contribution to total crime. The proportion of assaults declined from 35.1% in 1980 to 31% in 1985 ($z = 2.116$; $p > .001$). Similarly, the proportion of property crimes fell from 40.4% of the 1980 total crimes to 35.4% of the 1985 crimes ($z = 2.50$; $p > .001$) from 1980 to 1985. Public decency and crime rates stories, on the other hand, experienced nonsignificant decreases.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Overall, crime news in Louisiana dailies increased from 1980 to 1985. It appears that as much of the increased coverage was due to publishing more driving under the influence of alcohol incidents and crime prevention stories as increased coverage of personal and property crimes. Crime prevention items in the five-year period significantly increased by more than 200%. This trend reflected the media/police programs initiated in many Louisiana cities to inform and to protect the public against crime. Such an increase revealed obvious cooperation between newspaper and law enforcement agencies for the good of the

community. Nearly all of these stories focused on the media/police programs such as "Crimestoppers," "Neighborhood Watch" and the like.

Secondly, more crime news in 1985 rather than in 1980 was published on the front pages of Louisiana dailies. Those stories usually had large headlines which extended across at least two columns. But more than three-fourths of the crime coverage appeared on the inside pages. Ironically, the editorial practices of the large city papers in 1985 began to mirror the 1980 and 1985 practices of the smaller city and town newspaper. By the middle of the decade, between 14% and 27% of all Louisiana newspapers included crime news stories on the front page, whereas five years earlier, large city newspapers placed barely 6% of the crime stories on the front page.

Crime news simply does not seem to mirror reported crimes. Violent crimes are accorded a statistically unwarranted status in the media, unwarranted when one considers the ratio of violent crime to all other Index Crimes or total reported crime. One explanation of this paradox may be linked to the apparent failure of newspaper reporters and editors to cover more than just the obvious, most accessible crimes in their communities. Often crime news is published in nearly all daily newspapers the same day or the day after a crime happens. As a result, the collection of the full details prior to deadlines usually are unavailable or unknown. Information about offenders, for example, is impossible to put in a news story if the police lack suspects. The daily deadlines along with the daily crimes in a community mean that once a local crime was published in the paper

the news coverage of that crime is at an end. Crime having an "angle", such as heightened notoriety or criminal oddity, might warrant follow up coverage (see too Walker, 1985:17-18).

An equally plausible explanation for crime news coverage might be the lack of knowledge by newspaper reporters and editors. Too often news people fail to understand the criminal justice procedure or to study the FBI Uniform Crime Reports, and then to apply this information in their crime coverage. Finally, another problem in crime coverage is the obvious relationship between the police officers and the news reporters. Both groups have a vested interest in the information about crimes. Too often a strained relationship will limit the access for first-day or follow up coverage. Usually one reporter is assigned the police "beat," while more than 25 to 200 or more law enforcement officers might be involved in local law enforcement. Therefore, the reporter is limited by time in his or her selection of what to cover. The obvious result is the limited general details, especially if news reporters and law enforcement officials have communication problems.

Explanations concerning the inaccuracies of crime reporting should remain relatively constant over time. The fact remains that newspapers in Louisiana were portraying a picture of crime on the increase, a picture not totally consonant with officially reported crime. Certainly some might argue that a substantial --- and growing --- proportion of total crime news is intended to reduce crime, such as the publication of DWI lists or publicity of crime prevention programs such as "Crimestoppers",

"Neighborhood Watch", "Burn an Arson", "Take a Bite Out of Crime," and the like. Positive or otherwise, it seems just as likely that the reading public, overwhelmed by stories that focus on crime and criminals, may be given the impression that crime is indeed on the increase or that they have more to fear from crime today than ever before. These latter impressions would seem to be corroborated by public opinion polls on crime (Scheingold, 1984: 43-9; Sheley, 1985:16-18, 21-25).

Of course, the final question is one which has faced behavioral scientists for a long time, and one for which there are no easy answers: Does the media shape public opinion or simply inform the public? The public has a need and a right to be informed of crime, at the local, state, national, and even international levels. The impact of the First Amendment, the traditional retreat of an embattled press, cannot be ignored: Short of libel, the press can and does print what it wants to print.

The present study of Louisiana newspapers lends credence to the position of increased journalistic responsibility in the areas of public order crimes and crime prevention. Still, taken as a whole, the state's newspapers present an unrealistic picture of crime which, in the words of Scheingold (1984: 55-6), must at least serve to increase the levels of "vicarious victimizations." As Scheingold (1984: 56) and others (Skogan and Maxfield, 1981) have observed, the number of actual crimes and direct victimizations can in no way account for the high fear levels reported to characterize the American public. Apparently, one need not know a victim or even be a victim to fear crime.

Perhaps all we have to do is read about crime or see it reported on television. Ultimately, the central issue would seem to involve the separation of excess and frivolous pandering to the more base interests of society from balanced and informed treatment of significant events, an issue as yet unresolved by mass communication specialists let alone criminologists.

NOTES

[1] Each crime item was coded as to positional placement in the newspaper, i.e., front page or inside the newspaper.

[2] Each crime item was coded as to whether the item was published on the front page, inside page, or the editorial page. If a crime item began on the front page or Page 1, the beginning of the crime item was coded as "front page" and the remaining part was coded as "inside page".

[3] Every crime item headline was classified into one of the following five headline categories: (1) a banner, a headline across the top of the page; (2) a spread head, a headline more than two columns wide but not extending across the entire page; (3) a two-column head, a headline two columns wide; (4) a major one-column head, a headline of 24 points or more normally appearing at the top of a column or in other strong display positions; and (5) a minor one-column head, any other one column headline. For additional discussion of these breakdowns, see Stempel and Windhauser (1984).

[4] Each unit was coded into either staff or wire as an indicator of the news source or producer of the crime item. The staff category indicated that the crime news item was written by one of the newspaper's reporters. Wire items were those obtained from the Associated Press, the United Press International or some other indicated wire service.

[5] The location of the alleged crime or offense was coded to specify an area by local, regional, national, or national/international designation. The local category included any crime item which occurred in the city or town where the

newspaper was published. The regional area category included crime news from Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, and Texas, while the nationally designated crime items occurred in any other state. National/International crime items involved the United States and/or some other nation or a state other than Louisiana and some other nation. For example, a story concerning the kidnapping of an American narcotics agent in Mexico fit this category since Texas and northern Mexico were mentioned in the story. However, it is possible that National/International items involved crime that did not involve the United States or its citizens.

Each item was coded for a maximum of four specific offenses or non-crime events or stories "angles", including crime prevention and crime rates.[6] Four of the categories involved crimes: property crimes (e.g., larceny/theft, burglary), personal crimes (e.g., homicide, armed robbery, assault, rape), public order crimes (e.g., public drunkenness, disorderly conduct, driving while intoxicated/driving under the influence) and public decency crimes (e.g., prostitution, soliciting, pornography). In addition, crime prevention information was coded, including drug abuse and child abuse seminars and information relative to "Crimestoppers", "Car Find," and Livestock Crimestoppers" programs. Any items focusing on community/neighborhood watch programs were included in this group. Crime rates and crime rates/lists were the only items that contained more than four offenses. The entire list, often as many as 20 entries, was not coded because most of the arrests were for the same offenses, such as DWI or vandalism.

Table 1

Total Index Crimes and Index Crimes per 100,000 Population for Each City Size by Year

Group	City	Year 19803 Total Crime	19803 Crime/ Capita	19854 Total Crime	19854 Crime/ Capita
1.	New Orleans	93,389	7,890	95,317	7,198
	Baton Rouge	37,639	7,572	47,269	8,744
	Shreveport	26,294	6,980	26,679	7,365
	Group Subtotal	157,322	7,646	169,265	7,600
2.	Lake Charles	9,216	5,508	10,405	5,922
	Alexandria	6,937	4,584	7,271	5,214
	Monroe	7,433	5,469	6,589	4,599
	Lafayette	7,917	5,326	11,873	5,475
	Group Subtotal	31,503	5,222	37,138	5,499
3.	Houma	1,975	5,891	2,052	5,215
	New Iberia	1,207	3,694	1,163	3,211
	Group Subtotal[1]	3,182	4,806	3,214	4,253
4.	Thibodaux	1,091	7,309	838	6,485
	Bogalusa	1,158	6,861	907	5,193
	Ruston	991	4,814	882	4,065
	Morgan City	989	6,176	815	4,881
	Abbeville	535	4,317	392	3,163
	Jennings	348	2,801	650	5,098
	Crowley	662	4,097	509	3,012
	Minden	545	3,602	460	2,926
	Bastrop	865	5,615	692	4,348
	Opelousas	505	2,509	959	4,766
	Group Subtotal[2]	10,903	6,812	7,104	4,369
5.	Franklin	1,232	1,917	1,172	1,795
	Group Subtotal	1,232	1,917	1,172	1,795
TOTAL		204,142	6,917	217,893	6,795

[1]Crime data unavailable for Slidell in one of the years.
[2]Crime data unavailable for Hammond in one of the years.
[3]Data obtained from Uniform Crime Report 1980 (Department of Justice, 1981).
[4]Data obtained from Uniform Crime Report 1985 (Department of Justice, 1986).

Table 2

Papers, Grouped by City/town Population Size, Crime Items and Placement of Crime News Stories by Year

Group	Newspaper	Year 1980 % Front	1980 % Inside	1980 N	1985 % Front	1985 % Inside	1985 N
1.	Times-Picayune	3.5	96.5	85	14.2	85.8	120
	Morning-Advocate	16.5	83.5	79	12.0	88.0	117
	State-Times	3.7	96.3	54	29.0	71.0	69
	Shreveport Times	0.0	100.0	56	5.3	94.7	76
	Journal	0.0	100.0	13	25.7	74.3	35
	Group Subtotal	6.3	93.7	287	14.4	85.6	417
2.	American	0.0	100.0	34	10.8	89.2	37
	Town Talk	9.6	90.4	52	20.5	79.5	83
	News Star	11.1	88.9	27	22.7	77.3	22
	Advertiser	3.8	96.2	52	18.4	81.6	38
	Group Subtotal	6.1	93.9	165	18.3	81.7	180
3.	Courier	25.0	75.0	36	14.3	85.7	42
	Daily Iberian	15.0	85.0	20	13.0	87.0	46
	Slidell Times	25.0	75.0	16	25.0	75.0	28
	Group Subtotal	22.0	78.0	72	16.4	83.6	116
4.	Daily Star	27.8	72.2	18	2.6	97.4	38
	Comet	42.8	57.1	7	28.6	71.4	14
	News	30.8	69.2	13	5.6	94.4	18
	Leader	90.9	9.1	11	15.0	85.0	20
	Review	50.0	50.0	14	38.5	61.5	26
	Meridional	50.0	50.0	4	75.0	25.0	12
	News	77.8	22.2	9	30.0	70.0	20
	Post Signal	30.8	69.2	13	33.3	66.7	15
	Press-Herald	71.4	28.6	7	64.3	35.7	14
	Enterprise	47.1	52.9	17	37.5	62.5	40
	World	30.8	69.2	13	65.9	34.1	41
	Group Subtotal	50.8	49.2	116	34.8	65.2	258
5.	Banner-Tribune	57.1	42.9	7	100.0	0.0	4
	Group Subtotal	57.1	42.9	7	100.0	0.0	4
Total				653			975

Table 3

Headline Type of Crime News Item by Year

Headline Type	Year			
	1980		1985	
	%	N	%	N
Banner	1.2	8	2.8	27
Spread	14.4	95	16.5	161
Two-Column	26.3	173	22.1	216
Major One-Column	12.6	83	20.2	197
Minor One-Column	40.6	267	29.4	287
Cutlines (Photograph)	4.7	31	8.9	87
TOTAL	100.0	657	100.0	975

Table 4

Source of Crime News Items by Year

Source of News Item	Year			
	1980		1985	
	%	N	%	N
Staff	64.1	421	60.1	585
Wire	35.9	236	39.9	390
TOTAL	100.0	657	100.0	975

Table 5

Locale of Crime Story by Year

Locale	Year			
	1980		1985	
	%	N	%	N
Local	55.8	366	51.7	504
State	24.2	159	23.4	228
Regional	4.0	26	3.3	32
National	15.4	101	19.6	191
National/International	0.5	4	1.9	19
TOTAL	100.0	657	100.0	975

Table 6

Type of Offense or Story Content Included in News Story by Year

Events: Separate Offenses or Storylines	Year			
	1980		1985	
	%	N	%	N
Personal Offenses	35.1	336	31.0	446
Property Offenses	40.4	387	35.4	532
Public Order Offenses	19.3	190	27.7	416
Public Decency Offenses	2.1	20	2.0	31
Crime Rates Stories	1.5	14	1.4	21
Crime Prevention Stories	1.2	11	2.5	37
TOTAL	100.0	958	100.0	1503

NOTE: A single item or story could make reference to more than one offense of a particular type or even several different types of offenses. In addition, such things as crime rates or crime prevention programs could be included in a single item. Consequently, the total number of events included in each column of this table does not equal the total number of coded items.

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